

have a subject for the exercise of the highest idealizing skill in the grouping and characterization of verbal painting like that in which Macaulay puts before us the trial of the great delinquent Hastings.

There would be in such a picture a place for one or two figures expressive of the union of hearts aimed at by the great leader whose adoption of the cause of Ireland was the essential reason of the trial; there would be a place for Mrs. Gladstone, who watched the fortunes of Ireland as Sir Richard Webster and Sir Charles Russell fought from day to day.

Le Caron or Beach turned inside out—a monster of perfidious cunning—made men begin to think that a cause buttressed by such support stood self-condemned. The wave of public feeling began to turn, and with the fall and flight of Pigott the tide rushed on with resistless power. Sir Charles was morally triumphant along the whole line. The result was felt in the House of Commons. The Tories sat cowed on their benches, while the Liberals sat like men maddened at the thought that they had been deceived into countenancing the systematic falsehood of their opponents and its fruit in the atrocities of the then regime in Ireland. Mr. Gladstone was in the House, he rose to speak in language made possible by Russell's advocacy and concluded in words that may serve as a memorial of the great advocate: "You may deprive of its grace and of its freedom the act which you are asked to do, but avert that act you cannot. To prevent its consummation is utterly beyond your power. It seems to approach at an accelerated pace. Coming slowly or coming quickly, it is surely coming. And you yourselves, many of you, see in the handwriting on the wall the signs of the coming doom."

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SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI AND THE RELIGIOUS REVIVAL IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

AT a time like the present, when the Church is in the throes of a new development in history, and when with the dawn of the twentieth century she has to face a new world of ideas in life, social, intellectual and political, it is instructive to look back over her past history and seek an intelligent guidance from the lives of those who have already contributed to the Church's greatness. "It is only a fool who learns from his own experience; a wise man learns from the experience of others," is a reported saying of the

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German Bismarck. The study of the lives of the men who have made a people great is a wise precaution, especially at periods of quick development and necessary unrest such as we live in to-day. The movements which in the past have shaken the Church and finally brought to her new life, leave an indelible mark upon Catholic character which it would be fatuous to ignore at any subsequent period in history. For example, in the further development of Catholic thought which will mark the immediate future Catholics cannot afford to ignore the work already accomplished by the Christian Neo-Platonists and the Scholastics. The notion, not unfrequently broached in these days, that Catholic theology should now cast scholasticism behind it as a thing forever done with and useless, is historically untenable; a community cannot get rid of its history in that fashion any more than a man can get rid of his past life with all its moulding influences. So, too, in regard to the interior and mystical life of the Church there has been, and still is, a continuous development; a tradition, constantly unfolding from the days of the Catacombs to the present: the Holy Spirit working in the Church for the fuller realization of the Christian life.

This constant movement of life goes on universally in the Church, affecting the lives of the humblest members who are at all earnestly concerned with their religion, but it manifests itself typically in certain individuals, the spiritual giants of our race, who by the intensity of their character give point and body to the vague instincts and undefined convictions of the multitude.

Thus a St. Augustine becomes the centre of a widely scattered group of thinkers and apologists who think as he thinks, but have not his clear perception nor his power of expression; and a great intellectual movement thus becomes identified with his name. In his writings, too, the excelling genius of the movement will naturally be found.

Now, in the development of the moral life of the Church there is one period which for some time past has attracted the most sympathetic interest of students of Church history, both outside the Church and within; though it must be acknowledged that as in much else concerning Catholicism, so in this, the impetus came from outside. In the life of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries students have discovered one of the finest presentments of Catholicism, both moral and intellectual, but especially moral. It is the period when Catholic piety manifested itself in a most intense realization of Christ's earthly life and in chivalrous devotion to His sacred humanity: the age of the Crusades and of the Crib. It is to be noticed that at a period marked by strenuous speculation in the Christian

schools, tending to a cold rationalism, there blossomed forth this intense devotion to the earthly, concrete Christ—the Man-God of the Gospels and of Tradition—and that the moral reformation which saved Christendom in the thirteenth century was chiefly connected with this development of piety.

Of this movement the classical expression is St. Francis of Assisi, the moral and social reformer, whom Pope Innocent III. saw in vision upholding the tottering walls of the Church. And the interest aroused in the history of the movement has resulted in a vast quantity of literature dealing with the life of the saint and his influence on his contemporaries. Not the least valuable result of this literary activity has been the republishing of the ancient "legends" or memoirs of St. Francis, written by his own friends and companions. For centuries these precious documents, unique in the history of Catholic literature, were hidden away and almost forgotten. About half a century after the death of St. Francis discussions arose among the members of his order as to the interpretation of the rule which he had given them. The more zealous members appealed to the "legends" in support of their contention against those who were anxious for relaxation. The authorities in the order desired to put an end to division by compromise; but this the "zealots," as the upholders of the primitive austerity were called, would not hear of. In order to overcome their opposition it was decreed that the "legends" should be destroyed—a drastic measure which it is difficult to condone. Fortunately some copies were preserved. The most ancient of the "legends"—the "First Legend by Thomas of Celano"—was published by the Bollandists, as was also a fragment of the "Legend by the Three Companions," which is a compilation of personal recollections by the saint's three most intimate friends. In 1806 the "Second Legend by Thomas of Celano," a supplement to the "First Legend," was again given to the world by a learned Franciscan friar.

This "Second Legend" threw light upon several doubtful points in the received "lives" of the saint and gave rise to a more critical study of the sources already recovered. But it was reserved for the last two or three decades of years to see the outburst of a world-wide interest in the study of early Franciscan literature. As already noticed the impetus to this study came in great measure from outside the Church, and it is only just to acknowledge the debt we Catholics owe to non-Catholic efforts. And to no one is greater praise due than to M. Paul Sabatier, whose "Life of St. Francis of Assisi," published in 1894 and translated into most European languages, has done much to make the saint and the mediæval revival connected with his name known to the world. M. Sabatier's work

had many defects arising from a somewhat distorted view of the action of the Papacy in regard to the Franciscan movement; but he was able to make St. Francis live in the imagination. He did still better work in editing the long-lost "Mirror of Perfection: The Blessed Francis," the greater portion of which was written by Fra Leone, the saint's most cherished companion. M. Sabatier is now engaged in preparing other primitive Franciscan documents for publication. Not less valuable have been the labors of two friars of the order, Padre Marcellino da Civezza and Padre Teofilo Domenichelli, who lately edited the entire text of the "Legend by the Three Companions," the most delightful of all the "legends."

The value of these discoveries in confirming the popular cultus of the saint cannot be exaggerated. We can now see Francis as he appeared to those who knew him most intimately, and the result of this increased knowledge is to deepen our reverence and love for his name. "Those that loved him before may love him better now. We knew him saintly and human. We find him more human and saintly than we knew. The more clearly we see his features, the more clearly may we trace their likeness to those of the Man of Sorrows. It is the likeness of close kindred, the mystic likeness that once seemed a peril and has always been a glory to the Church of Christ."¹ Yes, in these original documents Francis stands out with a glory brighter than ever. His features, faithfully limned by his own companions and personal disciples, are more Christlike than we find them in any of the later biographies. These have generally drawn the saint as they conceived he should have lived: by deepening the shadows here and heightening the colors there, they have often caricatured and even falsified the saint's true features. The Francis of the later biographies is like an ancient masterpiece of art restored by inferior hands. But in the primitive "legends" we have the real Francis. To be sure, he is ever the hero and the saint and no common man in the mind of the writers; but then he really was a hero and a saint. With charming simplicity they relate what they heard and saw. There is no attempt to criticize, for they are disciples of a great master and they write with the candor of faith. They do not think to hide his human infirmities or temptations; these do not detract from his moral grandeur. They evidently do not think him the less a saint because he was more a man. To them he was verily a prophet sent by God to form a "chosen people" whom God had called out of the midst of religious laxity and degeneration, to bear witness to the true character of the Gospel; another Abraham, father of a mighty spiritual race that should endure unto the end of time. No less than prophet and patriarch

¹ Preface to the "Mirror of Perfection," by Sebastian Evans.

was Francis to them, and with delightful simplicity they found parallels in Scripture to apply to the saint and his religious family. The Chapel of the Portiuncula is another Jacob's stone; the promise of God to Abraham is repeated to Francis; the followers of Francis are the new Israel. But in Francis the Old Law is transfigured and becomes the New. He bears the character not of Abraham nor of Moses, but of Christ. Assisi is as Bethlehem, Alverna as Calvary, Umbria as Galilee. In the company of Francis they seemed to themselves to walk with Jesus in the far-off Holy Land.

How all this worked out in daily life may be read in the "Legend by the Three Companions," of which the following extracts are a specimen:

"The Blessed Francis, being already filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, called unto him his six brethren (this was, of course, in the very earliest years of the movement) and spoke to them of the things that would happen to them, saying: 'Let us consider, my brothers, our calling, wherein God has mercifully called us, not for our own salvation only, but for the salvation of many others; that going forth into the world we may exhort other men, more by example than by word, to do penance for their sins and be mindful of the commandments of God. Fear not because you seem weak and foolish, but without faltering preach simply penance, and put your trust in God Who conquers the world, because by His Spirit He speaks in you and through you, for the exhortation of all men, that they may be converted unto Him and observe His commandments. And you will find some men believing, gentle and kind, who will with joy receive both you and your words. But many others you will find unbelieving, proud, and blasphemous, who will resist you contumeliously, both you and the words you will speak to them. Therefore lay it up in your hearts to bear all things humbly and with patience.' Now when the brothers had heard these words they began to fear. To whom the saint said: 'Fear not, for after no long while many will come to you, learned and noble, and with you they will preach to kings and princes and many peoples, and many will be converted to the Lord Who will multiply and increase His family throughout the world.' And when he had said these things and blessed them, the men of God devoutly went forth, observing what he had taught them."

This was the first missionary journey of Francis' disciples. They went two and two, after the fashion of the Gospel, in various directions; nor were they long in experiencing the various receptions foretold by the saint. Some received them with the reverence and affection due to holy men; others took them to be tramps and assaulted them, pelting them with mud and even stripping their

clothes from their backs. Such treatment must have been peculiarly trying to men of sensitive temperament like Fra Bernardo, the saint's first disciple. But they bore all patiently, "according to the Gospel, praying fervently and solicitously for their persecutors." At the end of their missionary period they all returned to Portiuncula, outside Assisi, and says the Legend: "No sooner did they meet each other again than they were filled with such joy and sweetness as to forget altogether the injuries of perverse men." The Legend then gives us a glimpse of what we may call the friars' home-life.

"Every day they gave themselves to prayer and manual labour that they might altogether flee idleness, the enemy of the soul.² They rose in the middle of the night and prayed most devoutly with sighs and tears. They loved each other with an intimate affection, and each served the other and cared for him as a mother loves and cares for her only son. So great was the charity which burned in their hearts that each one would have deemed it an easy thing to give his life, not only for the love of Christ, but for the salvation of the soul of his brother, and even to save his body. Thus it happened one day, when two of the brethren went out, that a madman met them and began to throw stones at them. Whereupon one brother, seeing that the stones were hitting the other, at once threw himself in the way, willing that he himself should be hit rather than the other, so great was their mutual love. Thus were they prepared to give their very lives for each other.

"So grounded were they in humility and charity that each revered the other as his father and lord, and those who were superiors or who were in any way distinguished above the others, appeared only the more humble and unassuming. Moreover, they were all anxious to obey, and were so ready to carry out the will of him who commanded that they never thought to distinguish between just and unjust precepts; because whatever was commanded they took to be in accordance with the will of God. Hence it was easy and sweet for them to obey. They put from them all carnal desires. They judged themselves without indulgence, and especially did they beware lest they should in any way offend each other. And if it happened at any time that one said anything which hurt another, he was seized with remorse and could not rest till he had acknowledged his fault. . . . No one of them considered anything as his own; their books and whatever else they had were for common use, according to the tradition handed down from the apostles. But, although they themselves were truly poor, yet out of the things God had given them they liberally and ungrudgingly, for the love of God,

² This phrase, "*idleness, the enemy of the soul*," was frequently on the lips of S. Francis, and occurs several times in his Rule and Last Testament.

gave to others, especially the poor who sought an alms. Sometimes when they were traveling and met beggars, having nothing else to give, they would share with them their garments, sometimes giving away their hood, sometimes tearing off a sleeve: that so they might fulfil the Gospel which says, Give to them that ask.

"When the rich ones of this world came to them, the brethren received them readily and with kindness, being anxious to draw them from evil and lead them to penance. They were anxious not to be sent to their native places, in order to be free from the company and conversation of their relatives; thus observing the prophet's words: 'I am become a stranger to my brethren and as an alien to the sons of my mother.' Thus did they rejoice much in their poverty, . . . and they were joyful in the Lord at all times because among themselves there was no cause for sadness."³

No wonder that Jacques de Vitry, traveling through Italy in A. D. 1216, in the early days of the Franciscan movement, was struck with astonishment at this new body of men and women whose life recalled to him "the manner of life of the Primitive Church, concerning which it is written: 'The multitude of them that believed had but one heart and one soul.'"⁴

Surely in the whole history of Christendom since the days of the Apostles themselves, there has been no such another evangelical movement as this. Never has the world seen such another dramatic setting of the Gospel, played with such fidelity in the minute details of daily life. It was too sublime really for general acceptance. As the number of Francis' disciples increased (and they increased with surprising rapidity) the first high fervor waned. There were still some who walked on the high road of Francis' heaven; but the majority could not attain thereto. Historians lament the decline of the movement. Need we be surprised? The life of Francis and his early disciples was an inspiration rather than a set rule of life. Other men of less spirituality came after them, who aspired to walk in their footsteps. Most frequently they followed only at a distance; yet the world has been the better even for such a following as theirs. The humblest follower of Christ is still a witness to the Christ, even though he point to the Christ from afar off, and were he to disappear the world would oftentimes be lost in utter spiritual darkness. We must be grateful when Providence sends us the greater

³ "Legend by the Three Companions," chaps. x. and xi. ⁴ This letter of Jacques de Vitry is most valuable to the student of the early Franciscan movement. But its significance will easily be exaggerated unless we bear in mind that it is the letter of a traveler giving his impressions. M. Sabatier has, it seems to me, done violence to the text when he draws the conclusion that the religious Sisters of the order were "*seors hospitalieres*," and not contemplatives, because Jacques says: "They dwell together in various hospices; they receive nothing, but live by the labour of their hands." But this is quite consistent with the contemplative life. Francis did eventually enlarge the scope of his order, so as to include women devoted to a more active life.

lights of religion ; but let us not despise the lesser lights who are more constantly with us.

Besides these humbler, but honest, disciples of Francis, there were others who called themselves disciples—and they were not a few—who seemed destined to subvert, if it could have been subverted, the noble ideal of Francis' life. They saddened the saint's last years; after his death they well nigh brought the Franciscan movement into contempt. They gathered round Francis like moths around a lamp. They were not of his; they only usurped his name. We may therefore leave them to their fate in the contempt of history, and fix our gaze upon the pure and heroic figure of the saint himself. For by doing so we shall be able most surely to understand the spiritual motive which lay at the back of that wonderful religious revival of the later middle ages.

Renan, in whose mind truth jostled so intimately against error, had long ago singled out St. Francis as one whose personality has a religious message for the present age; and in his brilliant critique of Karl Hase's "Franz von Assisi" puts his finger upon the secret of the saint's influence, both in his own age and in the present. "Francis of Assisi," he wrote, "possesses for religious criticism an interest beyond expression. After Jesus, no other man has been endowed with a clearer conscience, more absolute ingenuousness, a more lively sentiment of his filial relation to the Heavenly Father. God was in very truth his beginning and his end." Then after pointing out how the life and character of Francis transcends our ordinary conception of life so far as to be almost incredible, and that nevertheless we have incontestable documentary evidence to prove it, he proceeds: "Francis of Assisi has always been one of the strongest reasons which has made us believe that Jesus was nearly all that the Synoptic Gospels have painted Him to be." In this last sentence we believe Renan has expressed in somewhat pedantic fashion the weightiest argument for Francis' popularity. Francis is a unique witness of the Person of Christ. The study of his life makes one realize the beauty of the perfect Christian life and its possibility; for here in a mortal man like ourselves, without any claim to divinity, we have a character so supremely Christlike, that the Gospel itself, in the light of his history, becomes an actual palpitating truth, convincing beyond any argument drawn from speculative reason. After all the most persuasive argument for Christianity is the living Christian. Yet even when we have admitted this, we can hardly be said to have given a satisfactory answer as to the secret of Francis' influence in the Christian world both in the Church and outside; nor can we be said to have given any sufficient reason for assigning to him, as many do assign to him, a special influence

upon the further development of spiritual life in the Church of the future. Conformity to Christ is always the lever of spiritual power in the Church; but this conformity must not be merely of external life, but of the interior spirit. The real Christian embodies in himself the Truth of Christ, not simply the outward action; and it is in the degree that he helps us to realize truly and understand the very life and thought of the Sacred Humanity of Jesus that he is a permanent factor in the development of the Christian life.

Now we believe that the most potent claim of St. Francis to the reverence of the Church is that he in great measure solved in his own actual life the difficulty which has always faced, and still faces, earnest souls as to the apparent duality of life. From the very beginning, at least since men began to look into their own souls, human nature has seemed to be the battleground of two irreconcilable forces, each of which seems to claim the proper allegiance of man, and each of which seems necessary in opposition to the other. So that man's nature has seemed to be an essential contradiction, and the only way to obtain interior peace has seemed to lie in sacrificing one element to the other. Yet, on the other hand, the instinct of the Church has been opposed to this view. She admits the apparent contradiction, yet points to a further development of man's being in which the contradiction shall exist no more, and yet the apparently opposing elements shall be retained. How to harmonize the natural and supernatural, the temporal and the eternal, has always been the crux of philosophers; Christianity has given the only satisfactory solution. Yet how few Christians realize it! In St. Francis of Assisi, however, it has been realized in a notable degree, and it is in this fact that his power lies. In him religion and all that was best in the world-life of his time met and intermingled in a rich harmony; in him it may be said with truth the world-spirit of the middle ages took flesh and blood and was indissolubly allied to religion.

It has been sometimes urged against mediæval Christianity that it retained a great measure of paganism in its spontaneous delight in the visible world and in its worship of the palpable Present, whilst at the same time religion was held to represent something apart from the Visible and the Present. So that, it is urged, the life of the middle ages was a dualism; Sense and Spirit being the two poles of a perpetual antagonism. We must, however, admit that if our mediæval forefathers were conscious of this dualism, they had also an idea, more or less vague, that this dualism could be resolved into a deeper unity, as is evident from the manner in which they were able to bring their delight in the sensuous into the religious liturgy. In doing so they manifested a belief that harmony between the

spiritual and the temporal is possible, however dimly they may have realized this harmony in actual life. They might not be able to reconcile the two terms of life; but they believed reconciliation possible. Their healthy instinct preserved them from that subtle form of Manichean heresy which has been so prevalent since the middle ages. Puritanism in all its forms (and we must bear in mind that Puritanism went beyond the Puritans) banned nature from the realms of grace, as an evil spirit is banned from heaven. But nature when thus banned is apt to become a troublesome enemy. The joy of life is not found in outcasting one of life's constituent elements. Mediæval Christianity recognized all the elements of human nature, from an instinctive belief in their essential harmony; and this instinctive belief was vindicated by Francis in his own personality. He was, in fact, the hoped-for Messiah in whom the promise of the mediæval spirit was realized. The patient belief that life's apparent dualism (represented in scholastic phrase as nature and force) did but hide a deeper essential unity (also represented in scholastic phrase as regenerate nature) was realized in Francis. He was a manifest embodiment of regenerate nature. Others beside him realized this belief in their own inner life, as any one acquainted with mediæval biography knows; but Francis did so on a larger and more generous scale.

He had indeed the natural genius which enabled him to do this. Of a poetic temperament he was quick to take note of the beauty of all created forms and to recognize a universal kinship between himself and all creatures, whether man or beast, or the very elements. He lived, so to speak, in them, and their life was part of his. The flower of the field and the running brook sent him into an ecstasy of delight; he seemed to understand the mute language of the beasts; he would sing for very joy because of the mysterious beauty of the sun and stars. His soul moved in all the grand elemental forces of nature as the soul of the musician delights in the complex harmonies of the symphony. He was a poet, with a poet's largeness of heart vision and intimate sympathy. But he was more. He was of that rare order of men to whom a right intellectual concept or an intuition is a moral conviction. Such men do not so much sing of truth or beauty as act it. They are themselves embodiments of the beauty and truth which they behold in the world outside themselves; in them the best that the world can give is mirrored and expressed. Such men are not merely artists: they themselves are an inspiration of art, and the value of their inspiration is in proportion to the generosity of their sympathy. Francis' sympathy with the world outside himself was indeed great and generous, as any one can learn who will but open the "legends" of the saint—

now easily accessible to all—or the *Fiorretti*, that wonderful supplement to the historical narratives, embodying the traditions and impressions of a somewhat later age.⁵

Now this sympathy with nature in its various creations was the very groundwork of Francis' religious life. With his poetic intuition he could never have acknowledged that nature was the work of the devil. In him the mediæval belief was strong that God and nature are allied, and that to love nature is to worship the Creator. He had an intuitive conviction of the great Catholic truth that the Divine is revealed in the Creaturely. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein"—such was the song that the heart of Francis perpetually sang. It was the chant of his worship both before and after his "conversion."

It was towards the end of his life that he composed his "Song of the Sun," an unmetrical string of verses in which he praised the Creator for the beauties of the creation. But this was only a more conscious rendering of the religious sentiment of his youth.⁶

Francis' conversion was, of course, the leading incident in his life, both historically and from the point of subjective analysis. He was in his twenty-fifth year and full of the ambition of youth when he fell sick of a fever. He was only just released by the Perugians, having been taken prisoner in a battle fought between the "patriots" of Assisi and the robber-nobility, who were assisted by the neighboring republic of Perugia. As soon as he was convalescent he longed once more for the freedom of the fields and the hills. But to his vast disappointment when he went forth the country had lost its charm, and he returned home with a chilled and stricken heart. Again he mingled in the civic revelries and led the light-hearted youth of the city as had been his custom; but the sunshine had gone out of it all, and in the midst of the fun Francis was sad and listless. The fact was that during his sickness he had been brought face to face with the thought of eternity; and the thought had taken hold of his soul and given him a new vision of life, or rather it had clouded the simplicity of his former view of life as a present enjoyment, and he could not yet grasp the mystery that had taken its place. He felt lonely in the midst of his former life; its joys had fled when the reality of eternity had first dawned upon his mind. Slowly and with much anguish of spirit which at times caused him to go out of the city to some solitary cave, and there cry aloud for very pain, Francis

⁵ See especially the twelfth part of *The Mirror of Perfection*, which treats of "His love towards creatures." ⁶ This song is supposed to be one of the earliest efforts in Italian literature. Generally St. Francis composed his songs in the language of the Provençal troubadours. The "Song of the Sun" takes its name from the verse coming immediately after the stately prologue. It begins:

(†)

Laudato sia Dio mia Signore contute le creature,
Specialmente messer lo frate sole.

came to see the truth. He had now become conscious that there is a duality in life; that the temporal and the eternal, the secular and the spiritual, are two actualities. Hitherto he had professed this belief, and now he realized it. This realization it is which precedes any spiritual conversion. One must perceive life as a contradiction before one can attain to any perception of the deeper spiritual unity. It is the way in which the human mind is accustomed to work.

To such a man as Francis, so sensitive to the beauty and joy of life, the perception of any essential, or apparently essential, contradiction between the temporal and eternal, must be the acutest pain. He was ever too much alive to allow himself to be comforted by the belief, generally adopted by men of less spiritual energy, that things will right themselves somehow. For him to live, was to live in the full consciousness of the realities around him. Life might be a contradiction; then he must drink the cup of contradiction to the very dregs. Or beyond the contradiction of life there might be a higher truth and more essential unity; if so, such a man as Francis will discover it. It was the same problem as presents itself in the fascinating legend of the founder of Buddhism; but in Francis how differently it worked out. The solution as it came to Francis may be stated thus: "The eternal begins in the temporal; time is the seed of eternity. What you see to-day with your eyes is not wholly true, neither is it wholly false. Nature in so far as it is not spoiled by man, is the germ of heaven; the beauty you delight in to-day is the promise of a greater beauty hereafter." Thus was Francis reconciled again with the visible world, from which the consciousness of eternity had for a time separated him. But the reconciliation was not yet complete. The visible world had gained with him a new reality; it had become part of the eternal; at least there was in the visible world the beginnings of eternity, mixed up with much that was a mere perversion of the original creation. Something was yet necessary to bring Francis into actual touch with the realities of his new spiritual vision, so that he might not be a mere stranger wandering through the Father's Kingdom.

Never, as far as we know, had Francis felt the need of total self-surrender. He had enjoyed life with the irresponsible enjoyment of youth. This was no longer possible. Had he been other than he was, or had his realization of the eternal been less intense, it might have been possible for him to regain touch with the facts and duties of life by taking to himself a wife or attaching himself to some great leader of men. Some such surrender of oneself to a personality other than one's own is necessary to every man who would live in actual spiritual contact with the world around him. Such is the law of human life. But no ordinary love was able to bring Francis.

into touch with the greater world now opened out to him. He must surrender himself to Christ only and for Christ's sake renounce those lesser ties which bind lesser men to the realities of life. He must renounce all for Christ, as under other circumstances he might have had to renounce all for some chosen woman's sake.

When this inward call made itself manifest, Francis was once more happy. He no longer went aside from his friends and groaned for the solitude of his soul. In surrendering himself to Christ he had again found the joy of life, only now it was a deeper joy—the joy born of an extended vision and of a deep personal love. He was once more at home in creation; but creation had now a larger aspect and a deeper significance. The vision of truth which was within his soul cast itself upon the vision of beauty without, and mingled in inexpressible delight. There were shadows there, wrought by man's sin, especially by luxury and selfishness. But the vision of earth which Francis now saw was one of essential delight. And with all this Christ had put him into immediate relationship, because Christ was the centre of it all. It was Christ's own kingdom. The glory of the earth was Christ's glory; the sorrow of the earth, too, was Christ's. Love of Christ therefore meant love of all creation, especially of all mankind.

The intuitive apprehension of this truth is the explanation of Francis' subsequent career and of that widespread movement which for a period brought back to earth the primitive spirit and conditions of Christianity when men forsook all for Christ and learned from Christ how to love one another. This evangelical revival, which realized the yearnings and hopes of all the best spirits of the later middle ages, was remarkable chiefly in that it reconciled the religious spirit of the age with all that was best in the secular spirit. The reconciliation was brought about by a fuller appreciation of that central mystery of the Gospel, the Incarnation, and its influence upon life in general. In the Incarnation Francis saw the reconciliation of the world with God, a reconciliation which implies that of the secular spirit with the religious, of temporal interests with the eternal. But in Christ he also saw how this reconciliation is brought about only by suffering and renouncement. This is the cost man has to pay for making an idol of the Present and Visible and separating it from its proper relationship with the Unseen and Future. Not until Francis became impressed with the reality of the other world had Christ any real significance to him as the Reconciler of this world with the Father. At the same time the Incarnation taught him to give the visible creation a positive value, fraught as it is with eternal verities. With Francis renunciation was but the stepping-stone to a larger life; it gave him freedom to satisfy his

spiritual aspiration and it likened him more closely to his Master, Christ. His renunciation of wealth and comfort had in it none of the Puritan's belief in the wickedness of nature. Even to the last he could appreciate the spirit in which ordinary mortals make merry at the dinner board over the meeting with a friend. He would order the knight Orlando to go and entertain his guests, when the knight himself thought it becoming to converse on spiritual matters with the saint. His religious songs were couched in the style and phrase of the troubadour. He saw nothing improper in applying the titles and style of chivalry to his own disciples. The friars were on his lips, "God's Knights of the Table Round;" St. Clara and her companions were "fair ladies of Poverty;" he himself was "the herald of the Great King." He was, then, no hater of the world; he loved the world for what was good in it; he pitied it with a gentle sorrow for what was evil. The evils of the world were the thorns which tore the bleeding feet of God's fair creation. This generous sympathy with all creatures it is which makes Francis so like unto Christ. Others have renounced the world for Christ's sake as completely as did Francis; others have preached to the world and ministered to its wants, spiritual and temporal; but few have so utterly appreciated and sympathized with the world as Francis did. In this he is almost unique. Not more truly did the impression of the five stigmata on his body mark him out as Christ's special follower than did his Christlike love of the world.

In his passionate love of Christ Francis again realized in the highest degree the aspiration of mediæval piety, which as Harnack has pointed out⁷ found its first great expositor in St. Bernard of Clairvaux, and its complete expression in the Poor Man of Assisi. To attach oneself to Christ and to follow Him in all the humble estate of His earthly life—this was the ideal of the middle ages, especially of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It was an ideal which appealed at once to the imagination and the heart; and the secret of all great moral movements lies in the appeal to the imagination and the heart.

I doubt whether people brought up outside the Catholic Church can appreciate what such personal devotion to Christ meant to those mediæval revivalists. To them Christ was an ever-present Reality, without Whom there was no reality, but only vanity and disappointment. He was the unifying principle of creation; everything visible received a permanent value only in so far as it proclaimed the beauty and truth and love of Christ's spiritual kingdom. Hence they sought for vestiges of Christ's presence everywhere, and every discovery increased their joy because it bore witness to the fact of

⁷ "History of Dogma," Vol. VI., chap. 2.

Christ's presence among them. Thus Christ was the bond which united them to all external objects. Now Protestantism, whilst professing to be an evangelical reform, effectually severed this bond of direct spiritual relationship with Christ which was alike the secret of primitive Christianity and of mediæval Catholicism. The Reformers declared that the Catholic Church with its sacraments and dogmas had come between the soul and Christ; but they themselves created a barrier which experience has shown to be impassable in their worship of the Bible. They at once reduced Christianity to the servile observance of a moral code in place of that personal attachment to Christ, spiritually conceived by the believer, which mediæval Catholicism in its best representatives endeavored to foster. The influence of the rationalizing party among the Schoolmen undoubtedly tended to base Catholicism exclusively upon an intellectual assent to certain formulæ. And, too, there were the mediæval ritualists who in their multiplication of ceremonies tended to forget the significance of the symbol and to reduce religion to mere externalism. Oftentimes they put the jeweled cope in place of the clean heart, and sang psalms when they should have been teaching the poor. These were the abuses of the mediæval Church against which many a reforming spirit had protested long before Luther. But the constant teaching of the leading lights of the middle ages—of such men as SS. Bernard, Bonaventure and Aquinas—was that true religion depended upon communion with Christ as a present spiritual Personality. Only a few might attain to this intimate communion in any high degree; but all were urged to strive after it. To them the Bible was of value only in as far as it gave them some glimpse of the life of Christ, either in His earthly career or in His spiritual working, as the Divine Word, in the hearts of His chosen people. What they sought was, in a word, the Personality of Christ, that they might conform themselves thereto. The Reformers, on the other hand, did as many modern nations which have taken to themselves a written Constitution, and govern by conforming to the letter of the law rather than by fidelity to the national ideal. Hence to the mind steeped in sixteenth century Protestantism, the religious life of St. Francis and his mediæval compeers is as unintelligible as is the English ideal of free government to the peoples of the Latin race.

Perhaps nowhere is the character of the mediæval devotion to Christ more vividly expressed than in the dramatic poem, "Amor de Caritate," sometimes, but erroneously, ascribed to St. Francis,⁸ and more generally supposed to have been written by the friar-poet, Jacopone da Todi. The poem describes the surrender of the soul to

⁸ The style of the poem is evidently of a somewhat later date than the opening of the thirteenth century.

Christ and gives utterance in the unrestrained style of a decadent period to the idea of mediæval devotion :

" I asked, not knowing, when I prayed,
For love of Christ ; it seemed so sweet.
Methought in peace I should have stayed."⁹

But the soul finds the love of Christ a consuming fire. It can find no peace now in mere creaturely delights. Heaven and earth do but cast the soul back upon itself with the sharp admonition :

" With all thy heart love thou the love
Which has created us that we
Might draw thy spirit heavenward
To love Him Who hath so loved thee."¹⁰

And so the soul finds no peace except in entire self-surrender. Then

" Transformed by Christ, with Him made one,"¹¹

the soul gains a new life and joy. It

" is made
The likeness of its Lord to bear ;"¹²

and in its new life indeed no soul-peace but the soothing ardors of a great love.

" In Christ I'm newly born again—
The old man dead, the new restored ;
And whilst my heart is cleft in twain,
Transfixed by love as by a sword,
My spirit, all on fire, would fain
Behold the beauty of its Lord."¹³

This beholding of the beauty of the Lord, or more correctly, of Christ all beautiful was the supreme ideal of the mediæval religious spirits. The beauty of Christ was the dream of their life, and it must be added that the sorrow of their life—a sorrow which finds expression nowhere more pathetically than in the life of Francis—was that the beauty of Christ was marred by the world's sin and misery. Sin to those mediæval disciples was no mere disfigurement

⁹ Inanzi ch'lo provasse, domandava
Amor a Christo pensando pnr dolzura ;
In pace di dolcezza star pensava.

¹⁰ Che celo e terra grida et semper clama,
Et tutte cose ch'lo dibbia amara,
Lascuna dice : Cun tutto core ama,
L'amore che n'ha fatto hriga d'ahhrazzare ;
Che quel amore perzo che te hrama,
Tutto nni hà fatte per ti à se trare.

¹¹ In Christo transformata quasi e Christo
Cum Dio unita tutta stà divina.

¹² De Christo se retrova figurato.

¹³ In Christo e nata nova creatura,
Spogliata homo vecchio, e fato novello ;
Ma tanto l'amore monta cum ardura,
Lo cor par che se fenda cum coltello,
Mente cum senno tolle tal calura ;
Christo se me tra tutto tanto bello.

of a passing world; it was rather a gaping wound in the body of Christ. As Christ is spiritually united with the whole world in intimate relationship of joy and sorrow, so the world's evolution was to their mind an extended drama of the life of Christ. Christ Himself was glorified in the pure heart, in the patient and in the just and in all the extension of His moral kingdom. He was also crucified again in the world's suffering. The stricken leper, the hungry beggar, even the broken flower, were incidents in the mystery of Calvary. Hence to the mind of Francis suffering had a peculiarly religious significance. To him it was the price of the world's redemption. Through suffering only could man attain to the perfect state; whoever would be of Christ must suffer with Christ the penalty of the world's sin. Like Christ Himself, Francis would willingly have borne, had it been possible, the world's burden upon his own shoulders; have suffered its pain and endured its varied wretchedness. As it was, his soul melted with compassion for his fellow-mortals. He welcomed all his personal pain because it identified him more and more with the suffering Christ and his suffering fellow-creatures. Days and nights he spent in prayer beseeching the Divine mercy to pardon a sinful world. He himself became an apostle, and willed that his friars should become apostles, to spread abroad the knowledge of God's love to comfort the sorrowful and to preach repentance for sin that Christ's passion might not be in vain nor the world's suffering misery unending. In sin he saw the source of all suffering; in penance and reformation of life, the remedy. With this conviction he put aside the idea of living a hermit's life and became a religious and a social reformer. "The world's suffering and Christ is still crucified in the world. Let us go forth and preach the Gospel of Divine Love and Eternal Life, that men may be stirred to put aside selfishness, hate and luxury, which are the cause of the people's misery." Such was in effect the precept he gave his disciples on the memorable day when he sent them forth to be evangelists, "to preach to the poor and heal the broken heart."

Such then was Francis of Assisi, the most Christlike of saints, and such was the character of the evangelical revival associated with his name. Rightly to appreciate him, one must, as we have already pointed out, view him in connection with his own time. He was typically mediæval, of the thirteenth century. Yet in the circumstances created by his own time he solved the question that has puzzled many souls in every age, and not least in our own. He discovered in religion a unity and perfection of life, a harmony of life's varied realities, such as the present world with its long tradition of Manichean duality is hungering for. It was said that he who would find heaven must leave the earth to the devil; that to take delight in

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the world that is, is to forfeit the heaven that is to be. For a time men tried to live by this doctrine with consequences sometimes heroic, sometimes hideous, according to the temperament of the individual and his circumstances. The doctrine produced a Cromwell and his hearts of iron—no mean advantage to a demoralized nation such as the England of the seventeenth century—but it also gave us the prime hypocrite and the soul-stricken gospeler of a later time. The revolt against so sore a heresy was sure to come in time. When it came there was danger of the Present and Visible being idolized and put in place of God Himself. Yet if Christianity teaches any truth at all it is that man is to look forward to another life and another world. Other-worldiness is the essence of Christianity. At the same time it has consistently fostered an appreciation of the Present and Visible, differing from that of ancient Greek and modern Pagan, because it teaches us to look through the Visible to the Invisible, through the Present to the Future. This world is the step to eternity. We are not to sit down and make ourselves comfortable on the step, but to pass over and enter in.

Francis of Assisi explains the problem on the mediæval background of his. He does not give us a direct solution of the problem in its modern details, but he gives us a key wherewith to work out the solution for ourselves. This key is a realization of and a personal devotion to Christ in His relationship with the world, and a Christlike love of the world. I say *Christlike love*, because there is another love which has for its patrons Epicurus and the leaders of the Pagan Renaissance, and in these days of catch phrases it is well to mark the significance of one's words. The evangelists of the thirteenth century, inspired by the life of Francis, would have had little to say that was pleasant to such love as this. Not Epicurus, but Christ, was their ideal; and how their endeavor to give effect to their belief brought to the world for a while something of the glow of undiluted Christianity can be known by the perusal of those early "legends" written by St. Francis' personal disciples and now once more published to the world.

As I have already said, it is well for us Catholics in the midst of the evolution of modern life and its necessary influence upon the life of the Church to keep in mind the heroic figures of the past. They have many a lesson to teach us which will be of value to us in these days, and save us perhaps much trouble and waste of energy. The Church of the future has its own work to do; it cannot afford to lose sight of the work already accomplished. A neglect of the history of the past would only entail greater labor in the days to come.

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